



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Lucero Robledo, a sixth grader at Pajaro Middle School adds new paint to a 1994 outdoor mural at Pajaro Middle School Tuesday during a full restoration job.

A colorful restoration project

Murals teach students art, instill pride in school

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Pajaro Middle School students are pitching in to bring a large outdoor mural back to life at their campus.

Under the guidance of Watsonville artist Yermo Aranda, several dozen students are getting first-hand experience in a major restoration job of the 1994 mural that is the centerpiece of the school's entrance way.

The mural, 43 feet by 10 feet, has lost its vibrancy, mainly due to exposure to sun and weather said Aranda.

"We are repainting the mural in its entirety," Aranda said. "The colors have faded so much — it is definitely time to get this done." The project is being funded by the Santa Cruz County Community Foundation.

Aranda said he always welcomes students' help. "This is a great way for students to get involved with their school, their community and the historical figures and images represented in the murals," Aranda



Watsonville artist Yermo Aranda (second from right) helps Olivia Granados (from left), Dominique De La Torre and Adriana Rodriguez work with brushes and paint.

said.

Students from Pajaro School's 21st Century program and the winter session have joined the restoration project. Aranda said he rotates students in and out of the project so as many as possible get a chance to paint. Alice Parra, project assistant, has worked along-side Aranda on numerous area murals, including Pajaro School.

Scaffolding and drop clothes, cans of paint brushes and trays of colorful paints surround the mural, which is now about 75 percent restored.

"I think it's a lot of fun and it gives a lot

of students something good to do," said Diana Villanueva, a Pajaro School eighth grader who joined the restoration project Tuesday.

Aranda, who has helped paint over 20 murals in the area, including the Watsonville Metro Station and La Manzana on West Lake Avenue, said the original mural was created from student-generated ideas. Working in conjunction with students, Aranda said, gives the students a chance to become integral parts of the mural, the school and the community for many years.

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"I've seen students bring their parents to visit the murals," Aranda said. "It is something they are proud of."

The Pajaro School mural was dedicated in 1994 to the late Joe Lomanto, who had been an art instructor at the campus. Figures and

images in the mural include John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Emilio Zanata, scenes of Pajaro Valley agriculture, education, and Mexican and American history.

"This is very rewarding work, especially to have the students taking part," Aranda said. "Their responses have always been positive and I see them returning, again and again, to ask if they can paint some more."